



★ STAR STUFF ★

The Newsletter of the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club

February 2004
Volume 13 Number 2



Editor: Jim Frisbie

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Season of Hibernation....

Those gruesome, blues-some gray skies cloud our every attempt at a stellar view. It's wintertime in this "Winter Wonderland," Michigan. Clearly, the state's Department of Commerce and Tourism could not have consulted with any astronomers in coining that moniker.

And so, here we sit, fresh off the holidays, dying to start the new year, perhaps armed with a new gaggle of gadgets, and maybe with a renewed resolve to make this the year... for that awesome astrophoto, or a new Messier Catalog completion attempt. And yet, night after night, there is no quarter, no place to go, for even a simple sky-gaze. One can get a little melancholy, as that big SCT or refractor hibernates, a mere dust magnet, in the corner.

What to do - with all this time, and all this astrostuff. No doubt it's a chance to complete any number of the ancillary tasks that might be done on any cloudy night. Maybe it's time to switch gear(s), so to speak. Or at least make an adjustment, here and there.

If you missed it, some of us took advantage of a golden opportunity to do just that - at the first FAAC Astronomy Swap meet, on Sunday, January 25. John Kirchhoff arranged for the store space, and Jim Frisbie coordinated the event for the club. Pat Korody and Bob FitzGerald were on hand to man the door, and John brought an enormous array of donuts and rolls, to go along with the stacks of discounted scopes and tripods from his Rider's Hobby Shop down the way.

I rented a table, as did a number of others from the club, and displayed some wares. In monetary terms, it was a big winner, for the club. Personally, I sold a few items myself - including a Taurus Tracker and a "Hoon" refractor - but then I ended up going home with more stuff than I arrived with. I'm just a sucker for "deal," I guess.

One item that was seemingly in abundance was the low-end Meade Goto scope, the DS114 reflector, selling from table to table, for \$100 to \$125. A lot of these were sold off-price last Christmas, including a bunch sold at Amazon.com and Sam's Clubs. I bought one myself, I confess, at the time. And now here they all were, piled up at a swap meet, a year later.... Still, if you wanted to find a starter scope for the aspiring astronomer-to-be, this may have been the time and place. This was an event worth doing, and doing again, maybe even a couple times a year.

Lest we forget to mention it, there was also the Lake Erie Ice Days event, too, on January 17, giving us yet another chance to put out the astronomical word, even amidst a winter's frigid blasts.

Aside from that, among the things to do, there are all those astronomy sites yet to peruse, to look for the latest, gasp-inducing pictures of the cosmos, or seek the latest news on our Mars rovers. Maybe there is time for another browse of the Astromart site, for that little gadget that might enhance astronomy efforts, in warmer, more opportune times.

Or maybe we have a moment or two to wax philosophic. Gazing up at a clear sky, it is amazing to ponder, among the many mysteries, that we are stardust, as the song once said. When Mars shown brightly, it beamed its red face. When I look back and return the gaze, in the chill winds, my face turns red, too, filling with the same element, iron, in the hemoglobin of the blood cells in my vessels, as that found in the rusty plains of Mars. An element availed in a star's generation, and destruction, somewhere in time between the Big Bang, and now... evident in all parts of creation, living, or not - and giving two of us, in this case, the same reddish hue. Children of the universe, Mars and me.

Well, now, back here on earth - it's a new year, still, rife with opportunity. As good a year as 2003 was for the FAAC, 2004 has gotten started with even more of a roar. And already there have been many inspiring ideas and suggestions put forth, for new directions and accomplishments for the club this year. Time will reveal all, as those

winter dreams of ours come to fruition, in the months to come. So, have patience, all – it is but a few weeks, ground hog indicators notwithstanding, until the skies begin again to bear stars, the ground begins to soften, and our ears even begin to thaw. Let’s continue to look forward - to another great year. And, to clear skies...

Dale Ochalek

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn MI 48121-7527

<http://www.boonhill.net/faac>

Submissions to STAR STUFF are welcome Please write to the address above or contact the editor:

Jim Frisbie
 via tele #: 734-453-1422
 or email: w8tu@comcast.net

Dead line is the 15th of each month of publication.

Officers:

President	Dale Ochalek
Vice President	Don Klaser
Secretary	Bob McFarland
Treasurer	Gordon Hansen

General Meetings:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club holds regular general meeting on the fourth Thursday of each month (except the combined November/December meeting held the first Thursday of December) at 5:00 PM at the Ford Motor Credit Building off Mercury Drive near Michigan Ave. in Dearborn.

Observing:

The Ford Amateur Astronomy Club observes at Spring Mill Pond within the Island Lake State Recreation Area near Brighton, Michigan. The club maintains a permit for after-hours access. Weather permitting, the club observes on Friday nights, Saturday nights, and nights before holidays.

Club Information:

Observing schedules and additional Club information is available by calling the Observing Hotline at: (313) 390-5456 or via the Ford Intranet: www.be.ford.com/astro/faac.html or the public Internet: www.boonhill.net/faac.

Club Membership:

Membership in the Ford Amateur Astronomy Club is open to Ford employees and non-employees. Write or call for an application.

Annual - New Member: \$30; Renewal: \$ 25 (before Jan 31 of each year); \$15 for new members after July 1.

Lifetime - \$ 150

Membership includes:

A subscription to the STAR STUFF newsletter and the quarterly newsletter the REFLECTOR published by the Astronomical League. Discounts on ASTRONOMY and SKY & TELESCOPE magazines, after-hours access to the observing site and discounts at selected area equipment retailers.

Magazine Discounts:

Do not send money to FAAC for SKY & TELESCOPE or ASTRONOMY magazine subscriptions. We have a form that you send in with your subscription directly to the publisher to receive a \$10 discount. Pick up a form at the next meeting, or contact a club officer.

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FOR SALE: Reduced for Quick Sale - Meade ETX 125 Spotting Scope, RA finder, Dew Shield, 26mm plossl. Like new. \$400 OBO; GOTO Computer. JMI Micromax computer with encoders and with cables. \$275 OBO; People interested may either send an e-Mail to TBLASZAK@ford.com or call 313.323.9842.

FOR SALE: Observing Chairs - \$85

Modified *Denver Observing Chairs*. Solid Oak and Oak veneer plywood. Folds for easy transport. Beats standing all night! Contact Gordon Hansen (Four chairs to sell) (734) 675-6137; ghhansen@comcast.net



FOR SALE: Logitech QuickCam VC, used, reduced from \$45 to \$35, Contact Abhijit, 313.595.5310

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 22, 2004
FAAC GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
By Don Klaser**

The meeting was called to order by Pres. Don at 5:00 p.m. 35 members were in attendance as we introduced ourselves and related our observing experiences since our last meeting. Gordon Hansen gave the Treasurer's report and Don Klaser presented the Secretary's report. The first Astro-Imaging SIG meeting of 2004 will be held on Thursday, February 5, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the Ford Family Learning Center on Rotunda Dr., west of Southfield Rd. FAAC Science Scholarship Award application forms were handed out at the meeting; they will also be available at the February meeting or by contacting one of the club officers. The election of officers for 2004 was held, and the following individuals were chosen to lead our club: President - Dale Ochalek, V. Pres. - Don Klaser, Secretary - Bob MacFarland, Treasurer - Gordon Hansen, Congratulations gentlemen ! Upcoming events for the club include the MarsQuest exhibit at the Detroit Science Center on January 24, the GLAAC planning meeting at Kensington Metro Park on January 24, the first annual FAAC swap meet in Livonia on January 25, a Valentine's observing night at Lyon Oaks Co. park on Saturday, February 14, the annual FAAC dinner party at the City Tavern on Saturday, March 6, and the Science Night at Forest Elementary School in Farmington Hills on a date to be determined during the second week of March. In the interests of time the technical discussion by Greg Burnett was postponed until next months' meeting. Then we proceeded to hold the 50/50 raffle. The main program was presented by John Schroer, entitled " Mars Update ", covering the current status of Spirit & Opportunity. A big THANK YOU to all the members who made generous donations to the projector fund ! The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m. P.S. I just wanted to say that it has been a pleasure serving the club as secretary for the past three years, and I look forward to my new role as your Vice President for 2004 . Thank You !!!

**TREASURERS REPORT JANUARY 22, 2004
By Gordon Hansen**

TOTAL Bank Accounts	\$ 1,652.72
Cash Accounts	
Cash Account	\$ 150.48

TOTAL Cash Accounts	\$ 150.48
Asset Accounts	
Astronomical League Dues	\$ 536.00
FERA Ticket Sales	\$ -
GLAAC	\$ 345.00

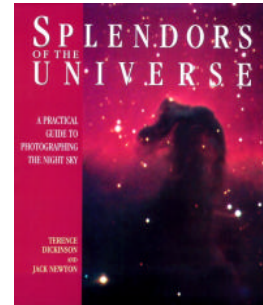
Projector	\$ 889.70
Scholarship	\$ 251.13
Swap Meet	\$ 215.00

TOTAL Asset Accounts	\$ 2,236.83

OVERALL TOTAL	\$ 4,040.03

**BOOK REVIEW: Splendors of the Universe
By Clay Kessler**

Splendors of the Universe
By Terence Dickinson and Jack Newton
Copyright 1997 by Terence Dickinson
Published by Firefly Books Ltd.



This large hardcover book covers the art and science of astrophotography, both with film and CCD cameras. I claim no special expertise, either as a book reviewer or especially as an astrophotographer! In lieu of actually taking astrophotos, under the great gray rock of Michigan winter, reading about them is one way of keeping my enthusiasm at a fever pitch. I have to say that I was very impressed with this book. All aspects of astrophotography are covered in a simple and interesting manner. Perhaps, if you are already a highly skilled astrophotographer, you may find some of the subjects covered somewhat "basic" for your tastes. I am not that highly skilled and I appreciated the simple start to some complex subjects.

The book is chock full of stunning photographs, most of them taken by fellow amateurs. What is amazing is that a great many of them are wide angle, camera on tripod shots that can be duplicated by anyone! Yes, there are some deep space shots that require special darkroom techniques that I cannot equal, but then I don't expect to be a Jerry Lodriguss or Tony Hallas (at least not this year ☺). Comprehensive discussions of cameras, lenses and films help the beginning or intermediate astrophotographer come to grips with this part of the hobby. Tracking mounts are discussed as well as piggy-back photography and prime focus photography. The last section of the book is on CCD imaging. Noted CCD astronomer, Jack Newton, shares his expertise in this well written section. Monochrome and tricolor CCD imaging is explained in depth and the gear required is discussed giving the whole process a more familiar feel. To top this off there are many of fantastic CCD images demonstrating the power of this cutting edge tool for amateur astronomers. The end of the book includes tables of data and lists of resources for the budding astrophotographer. I highly recommend this book

for the beginner or intermediate amateur astrophotographer or anyone interested in astrophotography.



Deep Space Network 2-for-1 Sale!

By Patrick L. Barry

Call it a "buy one, get one free" sale for astronomers: Build a network of radio dishes for communicating with solar-system probes, get a world-class radio telescope with a resolution nearly as good as a telescope the size of Earth!

That's the incidental bonus that NASA's Deep Space Network (DSN) offers the astronomy community. Designed to maintain contact with distant spacecraft in spite of the Earth's rotation, the large, widely spaced dishes of the DSN are ideal for performing a form of radio astronomy called "very long baseline interferometry" (VLBI).

VLBI produces very high resolution images of the cosmos by combining the output from two or more telescopes. The result is like having a giant "virtual" telescope as large as the distance between the real dishes! Since bigger telescopes can produce higher resolution images than smaller ones, astronomers need to use dishes that are as far apart as possible.

That need dovetails nicely with the DSN's design. To maintain continuous contact with deep space missions, the DSN has tracking stations placed in California, Spain, and Australia. These locations are roughly equally spaced around the Earth, each about 120 degrees of longitude from the others-that way at least one dish can always communicate with a probe regardless of Earth's rotation. That also means, though, that the straight-line distance between any two of the stations is roughly 85 percent of Earth's diameter-or about 6,700 miles. That's almost as far apart as land-based telescopes can be.

"We often collaborate with other VLBI groups around the world, combining our dishes with theirs to produce even better images," says Michael J. Klein, manager of the DSN Science Office at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. "Since our 70-meter dish in Canberra, Australia, is the largest dish in the southern hemisphere, adding that dish in particular makes a huge difference in the quality of a VLBI observation."

Even though only about 1 percent of the DSN's schedule is typically spared from probe-tracking duty and scheduled for radio astronomy, it manages to make some important contributions to radio astronomy. For example, the DSN is currently helping image the expanding remnant of supernova 1987A, and Dr. Lincoln Greenhill of the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory is using the DSN dishes to explore a new way to measure the distances and velocities of

galaxies.

And all this comes as a "bonus" from the dishes of the DSN.

To introduce kids to multi-wavelength astronomy, NASA's website for kids, The Space Place, has just added the interactive demo, "Cosmic Colors," at spaceplace.nasa.gov/cosmic.



This article was provided by the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology, under a contract with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

BEGINNERS NIGHT 2004

By John Kirchhoff

I will be happy to play Master of Ceremonies for Beginner's Night at Island Lake in 2004. I propose the following dates starting in May and running through October. All dates are on Saturday evening near first quarter moon. May 15th, June 26th, July 24th, August 21st, and Sept 11. We do not want to conflict with Great Lakes Star Gaze which I think is the 18th. The 11th has NO moon so we would plan some non lunar activities. How about October 23rd for a Plato imaging contest? As in the past, Beginners Night will be held clear or cloudy but not rain.

LOOKING FOR A DARK SKY ROAD TRIP?

The following text is a portion of an email that I received in January from one of our Dick Lawrence, one of our Club Members who now resides in New Mexico. If anyone would like to pursue this as a Club activity, please contact the editor.

Hi Jim,

I retired from Ford Dearborn Tool and Die in Feb 1997 and am glad to be gone. I now live in Portales, New Mexico near the city

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because I have a wife who wanted to live near the "culture". Spelled Wal-Mart, Sears and such. But I still own 460 acres about half way between Las Vegas, NM and Tucumcari and it is definitely a dark sky place. The only building there is a Quonset hut type which contains my personal machine shop. I plan to build several telescopes and other kinds of "junk" of no value, so she says. There is electricity and water available but no toilet or septic tank yet. There is one house a couple miles away visible but he has no night outside lights and there are no nearby cities.

Now, it has occurred to me that if the Ford Astronomy wanted to make a visit to that site that they would have a fine time there and experience some of the darkest sky in the US unless you go to some tall mountain. The elevation there is about 4500 feet above sea level.

I had a visit from a college professor to the area and he told me he had seen objects in the sky that night that he had not seen in 25 years. A few years ago I sponsored a star party about 30 miles away from my property at an RV Park site. Why not discuss it with the club and see what their interests might be on the subject? I would be glad to have them visit.

Dick Lawrence

ASTRONOMY 101 HEADS TO FOREST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

By Don Klaser

On Tuesday, March 9, we'll be taking our show on the road to Forest Elementary school in Farmington Hills. Our presentation last year was a big hit with both students and their parents, and we're expecting another great turn-out this year. The program will begin at 6:00 p.m. with indoor projects & displays, and John Schroer will be bringing the portable planetarium from the DSC. Afterwards, conditions permitting, we will set-up for an observing session. To get to the school, take I-696 to the Orchard Lake Rd. exit, go north to 13 Mile Rd. (about 1 mile), turn left, to Farmington Rd., turn right (north), to the second street - Old Timber - turn left. Follow the street through the subdivision; continue past the stop sign and the school will be on your left. The parking lot is just past the building, and we'll be using the doors between the 2 wings of the school. Call me at 586-596-9510 to let me know if you can join us !

ENSIGN PLANETARIUM PRESENTS

Submitted by Bob Fitzgerald

- March 24: Reach for the Stars
- April 28: The Earth – Sun Connection
- May 19: Special Guest Star, Kristina Nyland

All shows start @ 7 pm.
1501 Beach – Daly, Dearborn Heights, MI 48217,
313)274-3711

RECAP: FIRST ANNUAL FORD ASTRONOMY CLUB SWAP MEET

By John Kirchhoff

Local amateur astronomers shook off the winter blues Sunday January 25th by attending our First Annual swap meet. The event was co-sponsored by Rider's Hobby of Livonia who provided the site at their indoor R/C racetrack. The club managed to sell 24 tables and the swap saw almost 100 people in attendance plus 30 vendors between 8am and 3pm.

There was a good variety of all sorts of astronomy related items at some barn burner prices including books, binoculars, cameras, eyepieces and telescopes. Many items sold at well below the prices seen on Astromart and it was a plus for buyer and seller to meet face to face.

The event was a classic win /win event for the co-sponsors. Rider's provided the space and a number of tables to the club at no charge for the day and the club was able to bank all monies collected from table rentals and gate receipts less overflow tables and chairs rented. Rider's was very busy at the store with almost everyone in attendance making the walk down to the store to see the latest in new scopes and gadgets. There were more than several sellers at the swap that spent their earnings at the store!

Overall feedback was very positive with a definite " This was fun, let's do it again".

Many thanks to George, Pat and Rider's for providing the donuts and pastries through the day, they sure hit the spot!

In appreciation for making the Swap Meet possible, the Club has provided Riders Hobby with 3 months free advertising in Star Stuff.

ASTRONOMICAL IMAGING S.I.G.

By George Korody

The next meeting of the Astronomical Imaging S.I.G. is scheduled for Thursday, March 11. The meeting will be held in the usual place at the Ford Family Service and Learning Center in Dearborn, from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Tony Licata and Jim Frisbie will demonstrate and lead a discussion on Photoshop image processing techniques. The meetings are open to all FAAC members.

RECAP: LAKE ERIE ICE DAYS

by Dale Ochalek

There was the cold. And the ice. So the Lake Erie Ice Days, held on January 17 and 18, not only lived up to the billing, but, as usual, went much farther. Despite the temperatures, or because of them, the two-day, mid-winter fest continues to be an outstanding annual event at Lake Erie Metropark.

Ice-sculpting, dog sledding, and the downhill "snow-snake" race excited onlookers and participants alike. According to Bob MacFarland, there were just a bunch of fun activities, both indoor,

and outdoor - even a seminar on winter camping tips, among the many offerings.

For our part, FAAC club members Bob MacFarland, Al, Bates, George Korody, Bob FitzGerald, and others, enjoyed the festival, while helping man the FAAC table through the day, and also brought their telescopes and equipment. Greg Burnett, accompanied by wife Vicki, provided further educational assets, presenting his Astronomy 101 class for public edification. Plans for night observing went wanting, though, as the clouds held sway. A warm, delicious team dinner at a nearby restaurant sufficed, instead.

"We always have a great time there," said Bob, who led the FAAC team.

If you missed it, be sure to be there next time! Our thanks go to the gang of club volunteers who made it happen - Bob, George, Al, Greg, Bob, and all. Hope to see everyone there again, same time, next year - with a few less clouds, of course.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME !

FAAC Welcomes:

Jeff McKinney
 Kimberly Miller
 Matthew Mudie
 Richard Thompson

DON'T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR FAAC MEMBERSHIP!

By Gordon Hansen

Its not too late to renew your membership and continue to enjoy the benefits of Club membership

- Access to Island Lake observing area
- Discounts to *Sky & Telescope* and *Astronomy* magazines
- And best of all . . . sharing your love of astronomy with other club members.

Renewals for 2004 \$ 30

Life Membership\$150

Send your renewal fees to

FAAC
 P.O. Box 7527
 Dearborn, MI 48121-7527

Please include any updates to your address, phone number, email, etc.

February 26, 2004
General Membership Meeting
5:00 pm to 7:00 pm
Agenda

- | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|--------|
| - Introductions | Dale Ochelak | 15 min |
| - Reports: Treasurer's | Gordon Hansen | 10 min |

Secretary's	Don Klaser	
- Old/New Business	Dale Ochalek	20 min
- Upcoming Events	Dale Ochalek	15 min
- Technical Dis cussion	Greg Burnett	15 min
- Jantar Mantar	Jim Frisbie	30 min

A CALL FOR PHOTO'S

To add a little flavor to the Dinner Banquet, Al Bates has agreed to put together another slide show. He has requested all members send some pictures of the Clubs' 2003 past events and a couple of astro-photos. Please send them to me at w8tu@comcast.net and I will forward them to A.I

FAAC CALENDAR

Activity	Date	Time
- General Meeting	Feb 26	5 pm
- FAAC Banquet	Mar 6	6 pm
- Board Meeting	Mar 11	5 pm
- General Meeting	Mar 25	5 pm

2004 ASTRONOMY CALENDARS

Club Price: \$10 (Retail Price: \$11.95)

There are a limited number of these calendars available.

First come - - first served!

Place your order by emailing to ghhansen@comcast.net



T-SHIRT INVENTORY REDUCTION!

The Club has a large supply of T-Shirts from this year's and previous Island Lake Star Parties. Now is your chance to get yours at special prices! 2003 Shirts – Now only \$10, Sizes Available: XXL, XL, L, S

Past Year's Shirts – 2 for \$5.00 !!, Sizes: XXL, XL, L, M, S

For pickup at the next Club Meeting: email you order to ghhansen@comcast.net or mail your order including a check for payment to: FAAC, P.O.Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48183



FAAC DINNER BANQUET 2004

**SATURDAY, MARCH 6TH, 2004
6:00 pm until ?**

ASTRO SLIDE SHOW – PRIZES – ASTRO QUIZ

LOCATION: This years Dinner Banquet will be held at **Station 885**, located at 885 Starkweather, Plymouth, Michigan 48170, telephone 734-459-0885.

DINNER SELECTIONS:

Beef Tip Madagascar - Chef's special with sauteed tenderloin tips tossed with wild mushrooms in a Madagascar sauce with penne pasta.

Broiled Whitefish - Topped with sun dried cherry brandy cream sauce served with roasted herb potatoes.

Chicken Picatta - A Station 885 favorite, tender breast of chicken with sauteed mushrooms and artichokes in a white wine beurre blanc served with rice pilaf.



A mixed green salad topped with house vinaigrette or buttermilk ranch dressing.



Dessert Delectable of White Chocolate Mousse filled Eclairs.



Coffee, tea, iced tea, and soft drinks will be available throughout the evening.

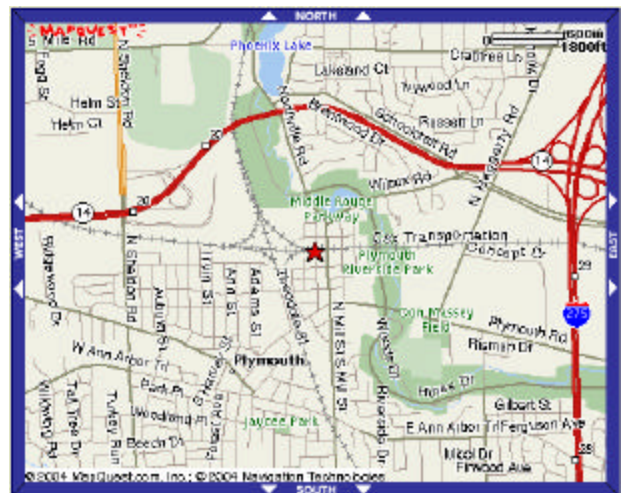
A Cash Bar will be available. Please ask your server for a selection of beer, wine, and mixed drinks available.

ADMISSION: \$29.00 per person.

COCKTAILS AT 6:00 PM, Cash Bar, Dinner at 7 pm.

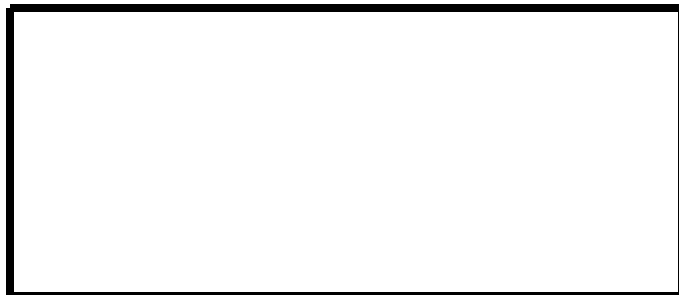
MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE: Please pay Gordon Hansen at the General Meeting, call Diane Worth or Send payment to Ford Amateur Astronomy Club, P.O. Box 7527, Dearborn, MI 48121-7527. "Thank you for another great year. We hope to see you there. Please let us know if you are coming!"
FAAC Board.

LOCATION: The restaurant, **Station 885** is located 3 blocks north of Plymouth Road, just east of downtown Plymouth. * See STAR on map*



For More Information: Contact Diane Worth via email: dianesails@sbcglobal.net or call (248) 737-5131 or Jim via email: w8tu@comcast.net or call (734) 453-1422

Ford Amateur Astronomy Club
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P.O. Box 7527
Dearborn, MI 48121-7527



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Store Hours: M-F 10am-9pm SAT 10am- 6pm SUN Noon-5pm	Gen. Manager: John Kirchhoff Website: http://www.riders.com Email: riderslivonia@aol.com	30991 Five Mile Rd. Livonia, MI 48154 Tele: 734.425.9720 Fax: 734.425.2029
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GET READY TO MARATHON!

Save 10% on all astronomy books and maps (excluding magazines) in stock through March 31st.

SPECIAL!!! Telrad Reflex Finder Now only \$37.99 through 3/31/04